

WASHINGTON CLOSE-UP

Homage to CIA Drug Fight Ironic

By JUDITH RANDAL

The American Medical Association, which predictably offers few surprises at its annual meeting, achieved the unexpected this year.

As one entered the convention's exhibition hall in San Francisco's Civic Center, one's nostrils were assailed by an odor more appropriate to that city's Haight-Ashbury district — an aroma strongly suggestive of the burning leaves and blossoms of the female *Cannabis sativa* plant.

The scent fired the curiosity of all in the hall who had ever sampled marijuana and drew from the wife of one physician attending the meeting the remark that she had smelled that odor many times in the back of the school bus she drives.

That was only the beginning of the surprise. Following one's nose, one soon came upon a booth housing an exhibit on drug abuse which featured a display about many drugs, including pot, and a device that generated a synthetic smoke that was close to, if not identical with the real thing.

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There was still more surprise to come in this display, which — it turned out — had won the gold medal in the AMA's coveted Billings Prize competition as one of the outstanding scientific exhibits of the meeting. The exhibitor was no mere doctor or pharmaceutical firm, or even your average, run-of-the-mill science-oriented government bureau. It was that most unlikely of contenders for an AMA award: The Central Intelligence Agency.

Dr. Donald Borcharding of the CIA was on hand to explain the exhibit's origins. Like most agencies, he said, the CIA has an occupational health division whose job it is to promote the well-being of its personnel. When CIA officials at the agency's Langley,

Va., headquarters became worried about pot, LSD, speed, heroin and the like, Borcharding and his colleagues assembled the display.

According to the CIA medic, it was an immediate hit, not only at the Langley "Spook Farm" but also among groups in the community, such as Knights of Columbus lodges and parent-teacher associations. The CIA is thinking about putting together "how-to-do-it" instructions so that other groups can build their own replicas.

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Granted, the crusade against drug abuse needs all the help it can get. But the trouble with the CIA exhibit is that it does not tell things strictly as they are. For example, it implies that the use of marijuana sets the stage for later use of heroin. This issue is by no means settled and, as a matter of fact, there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that alcohol, rather than marijuana, is the first drug to be abused by most people who subsequently become heroin addicts.

In any case, many experts believe that if there is any connection whatever between pot and heroin, it is their illegal status and that if the former were "decriminalized," its link with the latter would tend to disappear.

More important to this discussion than an argument about the casual relationship of the two drugs is the point that the CIA does not come into the campaign with completely clean hands. Reporters have been hearing for more than a year that the agency has been supporting the heroin traffic in the Golden Triangle region of Laos, Thailand and Burma, and that this opium byproduct has been one of the more important cargoes carried by Air America, an airline operating in Southeast

Asia whose charter business is almost exclusively with the CIA. The Golden Triangle region, incidentally, is said to grow 70 percent of the world's illicit opium from which morphine base, morphine and eventually heroin are derived.

For more details on the CIA's complicity in the heroin mess, one might consult an article entitled "Flowers of Evil" by historian Alfred W. McCoy, in the July issue of Harper's magazine. Part of a forthcoming book called "The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia," the article spells out in detail how Vag Pao, long the leader of a CIA secret army in Laos, has become even more deeply involved in the drug traffic and what role this traffic has played in the importation of heroin into the United States and its use by our troops in South Vietnam.

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Writes McCoy of the situation: "As a result of direct and indirect American involvement, opium production has steadily increased, high-grade heroin production is flourishing and the Golden Triangle's poppy fields have become linked to markets in Europe and the U.S."

The CIA went away from the San Francisco meeting with a gold medal and, no doubt, a good many doctors who saw the exhibit went away impressed. Some of them probably learned for the first time what pot smells like.

But for others there was a bitter incongruity in the government's super-secret spy arm winning a medal for an exhibit on the horrors of drug abuse. To some it was a little like the Mafia getting a top award for a display of the evils of extortion, prostitution and gambling — and a few of the more socially aware physicians present did not hesitate to say so.

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CIA OPERATIONS CENTER

SELECT FOR THE DCI

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SUBJECT: C.I.A. WINS TOP PRIZE AT A.M.A. CONVENTION

SOURCE : UPI 015A

DTG : 230114EDT

DISTO : DCI, DDCI, EX/DIR, DCI/IC, [REDACTED]

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WITH AMA

SAN FRANCISCO (UPI)--

CPYRGHT

"DRUG ABUSE" WON TOP PRIZE AT THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION CONVENTION--DESPITE A BAG OF ERSATZ MARIJUANA.

THE BOOTH, ORIGINALLY CREATED BY CIA DOCTORS FOR PARENTS WHO WORK FOR THE AGENCY, WARNED OF DRUG DANGERS, SHOWED EXAMPLES OF NARCOTICS AND GAVE OFF THE "SHELL OF MARIJUANA."

BUT DOCTORS WHO MANNED IT SAID THE BAG OF DRIED LEAVES AND STEMS LABELED MARIJUANA WASN'T REAL--ALTHOUGH A BAG OF THE ACTUAL USED HANGS ON THE DISPLAY NORMALLY AND WAS FLOWN TO SAN FRANCISCO.

THEY SAID FEDERAL NARCOTICS AGENTS WARNED THEM THAT TRANSPORTING MARIJUANA ACROSS STATE LINES WILL BE ILLEGAL--EVEN FOR THE CIA.

ALTHOUGH THEY TOOK THE BAG OFF FOR THE AMA CONVENTION, THE PHYSICIANS APPARENTLY PLANNED TO COMPOUND THEIR "CRIME" BY FLYING THE MARIJUANA BACK TO THE WASHINGTON, D.C., AREA FOR REGISTRATION ON THE PERMANENT DISPLAY.

THE CIA MEDICS SAID THE BOOTH--WHICH WON THE AMA'S DILLIGUS GOLD MEDAL FOR DOING THE BEST JOB OF PRESENTING INFORMATION -- EDUCATED AT LEAST ONE DOCTOR'S WIFE.

THE WOMAN, WHO ACTS AS A HIGH SCHOOL BUS MONITOR IN A SAN FRANCISCO SUBURB, SMELLED THE BURNING SUBSTANCE SEVERAL TIMES, PAUSED, THEN SNIPPED IT AGAIN.

"THAT SMELLS JUST LIKE THE BACK OF MY BUS," SHE SAID.

UPI 06-23 01:14 AED

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PAGE 1 OF 1

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1825: AWARD:

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BY BOB WILLIAMS

SAN FRANCISCO, JUNE 22, REUTER-- THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (AMA) TODAY PRESENTED THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY (CIA) WITH ITS TOP EXHIBIT AWARD FOR THE AGENCY'S SCIENTIFIC DISPLAY ON DRUG ABUSE.

THE CIA WON THE AWARD, AN AMA SPOKESMAN TOLD REUTERS. BECAUSE ITS EXHIBIT--WHICH INCLUDED A WAIST-HIGH MACHINE EMITTING SMOKE RESEMBLING THAT FROM BURNING MARIJUANA--WAS "THE MOST IMPRESSIVE IN THE JUDGMENT OF THE SCIENTIFIC AWARDS COMMITTEE."

THE AWARD CAME ON THE FINAL DAY OF THE AMA'S ANNUAL CONVENTION HERE WHICH WAS ATTENDED BY SOME 10,000 DOCTORS. THE ASSOCIATION REPRESENTS 204,980 OF THE 344,823 DOCTORS IN THE NATION.

THE AGENCY EXHIBIT DEPICTS ACTUAL EXAMPLES OF GROWING MARIJUANA LEAVES, MARIJUANA IN VARIOUS STAGES OF PROCESSING AND MACHINES FOR ROLLING MARIJUANA CIGARETTES. SAMPLES OF OTHER DRUGS, SUCH AS HEROIN, ARE DISPLAYED.

ONE OF THE THREE CIA DOCTORS ON DUTY AT THE EXHIBIT, DR. DONALD BORCHERDING, SAID THE EXHIBIT BEGAN AS AN INSTRUCTION DISPLAY FOR AGENTS WHO WORK IN THE CIA'S WASHINGTON HEADQUARTERS.

THE DISPLAY RECEIVED SUCH STRONG INTEREST, HE SAID, THAT "WE BEGAN TAKING IT TO OUTSIDE GROUPS IN THE WASHINGTON VIRGINIA SUBURBAN AREA."

AS A RESULT OF THE INCREASED INTEREST IN THE EXHIBIT, HE SAID, "THE AGENCY DECIDED TO APPLY TO THE AMA FOR PERMISSION TO PUT IT ON DISPLAY HERE."

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1888: AWARD SAN FRANCISCO:

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BORCHERDING SAID THE MACHINE EMITTING MARIJUANA-LIKE SMOKE HAS ATTRACTED THE MOST ATTENTION OF DOCTORS AND OFFICIAL GUESTS VISITING THE SCIENTIFIC EXHIBIT ROOMS WHERE OVER 250 DISPLAYS ON SUBJECTS RANGING FROM "SKIN DISORDERS OF THE NEWBORN" TO "MANAGEMENT OF STABWOODS" ARE LOCATED IN THE MAIN CONVENTION HALL.

SMALL CHILDREN TAKE A WHIFF OF THE ACRID-SMELLING SMOKE AND SAY "ODD--THAT'S AWFUL," BORCHERDING SAID. "THOSE WHO HAVE PROBABLY HAD QUITE A BIT OF EXPERIENCE WITH THE REAL THING TELL US THE SMOKE SHOULD BE A LITTLE SWEETER," HE SAID.

PERHAPS THE MOST SURPRISED PERSON TO SAMPLE THE SMELL FROM THE MACHINE WAS A DOCTOR'S WIFE WHO DRIVES A SMALL SCHOOL BUS CARRYING TEENAGERS TO SUBURBAN SCHOOLS NORTH OF SAN FRANCISCO.

SHE SMELLED THE SMOKE CAREFULLY SEVERAL TIMES, BORCHERDING SAID, AND THEN SAID, "WHY--IT SMELLS JUST LIKE THE BACK OF MY SCHOOL BUS."

REUTER RAG/MT